THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Our Armed Forces are provided with state-of-the-art equipment required to tackle the proxy war situation and prevent infiltration/exfiltration of mercenaries and militants in the border areas including the North-East. The requirements of our Armed Forces are reviewed on a continuing basis for induction of modernised weapons and weapon systems and keeping in view threat perceptions and the prevailing strategic/security environment as also emerging technologies. As part of the modernisation process and in order to absorb state-of-the-art technology and ensure effective utilisation of equipment, Armed Forces personnel are also provided regular training. The modernisation plans also envisage restructuring of the existing organisation and procedural aspects to ensure that the human, material and financial resources available for the defence of the country are optimally utilised.

Accommodation and transport allowance to CSD Manager

2163.SHRI P. SOUNDARARAJAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the manager of the unit canteen of CSD at Air Force Station, New Delhi has been provided Government accommodation meant for serving personnel in violation of rules;

(b) whether it is also a fact that he has been drawing transport allowance though the distance between office and the residence is less than one Km.; and

(c) what action Government propose to take against the officials responsible for that flagrant violation of rules?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Allotment of accommodation to the manager of the Unit Run Canteen (URC) of CSD canteen at Air Force Station, Race Course, New Delhi has been made by the competent authority under his discretionary powers, as is permissible for key personnel on administrative considerations.

(b) He is drawing transport allowance as admissible under the rules.

(c) Does not arise.

High State of Defence Preparedness

2164.SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether at the annual combined commanders conference on 24th November, 1999, the Prime Minister expressed the apprehension that the military coup in Pakistan had increased the possibility of an escalation in proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir;

(b) if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken to ensure a high state of defence preparedness, to thwart any threat to India's security; and

(c) whether, in the prevailing situation, it would be worthwhile to pursue negotiations with the military rulers in Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) At the Annual Commanders Confernece on 24th November, 1999, the Prime Minister stated that the recent military coup in Pakistan is a matter of grave concern and that the present rulers are all too likely to intensify the proxy war and engage even in Kargil type misadventure.

(b)A high state of defence preparedness is being maintained and a constant vigil is being exercised to meet any threat all along the border. The requirements of our Armed Forces are reviewed on a continuing basis for induction of modernised weapons and weapon systems and keeping in view threat perceptions and the prevailing strategic/ security environment as also emerging technologies.

(c)Government have called upon Pakistan to take steps to repair trust and confidence and facilitate the process by creating a proper environment in which meaningful dialogue can take place. However, Government have seen no response yet that Pakistan is going in this direction.

Modernisation of Indian Army

2165. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the recent Kargil conflict has shown utter lack of modem equipment with the Indian Army and other essential equipments required for conflicts in such border areas for which Government had to rush for imports;

(b)if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reasons for failure to modernise the Indian Army, keeping pace with the requirements and necessities; and

(d)whether, with the experience gained, Government have formulated/propose to formulate a time-bound programme for modernisation of Indian Army?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) Modernisation of Armed Forces is a continuous process necessitated by changing threat perceptions and advancements in technology. The Army's requirement for equipment, ammunition, clothing and other items is reviewed in the Army HQ from time to time and projected to Ministry of Defence. Action to meet the assessed priority requirement is taken within the available resources.

All requirements projected by the Army in the backdrop of Kargil Operation for supply of equipment, armament and material are expeditiously processed.